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## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RUSSIAN SOUL

SIR,—Being for several years a faithful reader of your valuable periodical, I perused the article of Mr. Shaw in February, 1918, regarding the great Russian writer, Fedor Dostoevski. All this article is based on a mistake which I can explain by insufficient knowledge of the Russian language on the part of Mr. Shaw. The phrase, "the Russian soul is a mystery," was completely misunderstood and mistranslated by the words: "The Russian soul is a dark place" (*Russkaya dusha potemki*, which means "The Russian soul is the deepest mystery," but not dark).

I have no time to show that every point in this article is wrong, but I wish to express my deep desire for the better relations between two races in future, that no unclean hands and unclean purposes would touch the holy things and the shrines of both nations. When we are ready to put on the clean dress-shirt, we wash our hands if they are not clean; otherwise the shirt will be spotted, and the laundry will be accused instead of our own hands.

What about Dostoevski, who is respected in Russia as a prophet and who showed the purest and the cleanest sources of the Russian soul through awfulest crimes of the derelicts and the degenerates which were the heroes of this writer? I wish only to make a parallel with another far greater genius, but as well gentle—Shakespeare. If perverse mind will bring the attention of the reader to the heroes of *Pericles* and *Titus Andronicus*, with the description of the ugliest crimes and vices, or to many scenes of the Historical Chronicles or *King Lear*, and will leave without remarks the greatest ideas of Shakespeare, his strong propaganda against capital punishment, his unparalleled humanity at the rough time of the sixteenth century, his clemency even for the criminals, his unsurpassed kindness, many times higher than even in the Holy Scripture—then the reader may receive just the same wrong idea about the greatest humanitarian of England and of the whole world—Shakespeare.

Hands off, you all who want to destroy the shrines of the nation or of all humanity, for the purpose of some political propaganda! Dostoevski, Tolstoi, Pushkin, are our shrines, our saints, our glory. Isn't it enough for you that Russia, devastated by Germany, has fallen into the hands of the wickedest fiends who came from New York and Switzerland and who sell our country, our towns, our museums, our temples, to the enemy, who stir up the roughest instincts of the mob to destruction, and who are cheering their victory over the Russian nation, applauding our humiliation and our misery?

SEATTLE, WASH.

DR. ALEXANDER KOHANOWSKI  
(Secretary to the Russian Consulate).

P. S.—I return once more to the *leit-motif* of the article of Mr. Shaw: "The Russian soul is a dark place," instead of, as it ought to be, "The Russian soul is a deep mystery."

This last one phrase of Dostoevski—*Russkaya dusha potemki*, or: "The Russian soul is a mystery"—comes from a very popular Russian proverb: "Stranger's soul is a mystery," or in Russian: *chujayá dusha potemki*. In this proverb, a Russian had no intention to insult a stranger

as having a dark soul. The word *potemki* means "incapability to see anything by a blind man," and in this expression means only—and nothing else—"mystery."

A. K.

### A LITTLE LESSON IN LOGIC

SIR,—I have no doubt that you want to do your fullest bit in the prosecution of our great war, but do you think you are helping the cause by such "cutting and slashing" editorials as your "Plea to the President," which appears in your March number? What do you suppose would be the effect on the public morale and on the morale of the soldiers who are fighting in the field and training in the various camps if this editorial were echoed by all the magazines and newspapers of the country?

I have no doubt it is hard for you—it would be for me if I were in your place—to "forgive and forget" Mr. Wilson's blunderbuss in eliminating you from his supporters in 1911-12 after all you had done in support of his Presidential candidacy; and it is very natural for you to remember his refusal to recognize the "unspeakable Huerta" as President of Mexico, which you so strongly urged upon him, and perhaps you have not yet recovered from your disappointment on account of his defeating Mr. Hughes in 1916, whom you were so very, very, anxious to place in the Presidential office. But since Mr. Wilson is the people's chosen President, since he is the captain of the ship on which we are sailing over bloody seas, since he is Commander-in-Chief of the army and navy, which are a wall of fire between the German war machine and our free government, is it not better that the people—and the army—should have the fullest possible confidence in his Administration?

As to your question whether a former pacifist like Secretary Baker can possibly prosecute the war efficiently as the head of the War Department, let me refer you to the cases of William McKinley and Abraham Lincoln, saying nothing about the cases of millions on millions of your fellow-citizens who deprecated war and were anxious to avoid a conflict with Germany, but are now ready to "do or die" in their country's cause.

NEWARK, OHIO.

MILTON R. SCOTT.

[Our courteous correspondent seems to be laboring under an error of logic peculiar to a certain type of American mind. It consists in assuming that support of the Nation in its high purposes is synonymous with support of the Nation's administrative agents in their follies and ineptitudes. Let us paraphrase the second question of our correspondent's letter and turn it in his own direction: "What do you suppose would be the effect on the public morale and on the morale of the soldiers who are fighting in the field and training in the various camps if they thought that the stubborn stupidities of the men responsible for their lives and the safety of the Nation were deliberately concealed and condoned by those intrusted with the duty of public comment upon the conduct of the war?" Our correspondent, thinking reverently of Secretary Baker, refers to the attitude of Lincoln and McKinley toward *their* War Secretaries. Well, when Lincoln found that Cameron was unfit, Cameron went; and Alger did not survive the revelation of his incompetency as long as Baker has survived the revelation of his.—EDITOR.]